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TAVISTOCK URBAN DISTRICT



*Annual Report*

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER

OF HEALTH

FOR THE

Year Ended 31st December, 1958





## *Public Health and Housing Committee*

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The following members of the Council served on the above Committee during the year:—

*Chairman:* H. MOORE  
*Vice-Chairman:* MRS. H. T. GILLIES  
*Members:* G. P. CLARK  
W. A. HAYWARD  
E. H. KNAPE  
A. J. MILL  
MRS. D. L. H. PINDER  
F. G. QUANT

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### *Public Health Staff*

#### *Medical Officer of Health*

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.D., CH.B., D.P.H.

#### *Surveyor and Public Health Inspector*

P. M. WALSH, L.F.S., L.A.B.S.S., C.R.S.I.

#### *Additional Public Health Inspector and Meat Inspector*

M. E. NORTHCOMBE, A.R.S.H.

#### *M.O.H. Secretary*

MISS P. B. FLETCHER

#### *Meteorological Observer*

MR. T. H. HARRIS

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit this, my twenty second annual report, for the year ended 31st December, 1958.

The general health of the town has been good throughout the year, and reports of notifiable infectious diseases have once again been very low.

The crude birth rate for the town is considerably below the figure supplied by the Registrar General for the country as a whole, whilst the death rate is correspondingly higher.

The population of the town, which increased last year, has dropped to the same numbers given for the year 1956.

## SECTION "A"

### GENERAL STATISTICS

Area (Statute acres) .....	2,098
Population—1931 Census .....	5,130
Population—1951 Census .....	5,889
Estimated Home Population—Mid 1958 .....	6,180
Number of inhabited houses .....	1,919
Rateable Value .....	£79,462
Product of the Penny Rate .....	£314 12 10
Loan Debt .....	£588,165 0 0

### VITAL STATISTICS

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Live Births</b> .....	38	26	64
Legitimate .....	36	25	
Illegitimate .....	2	1	
<b>Deaths</b> .....	55	46	101
			<i>England and Wales</i>
Live Births .....	64		
Live Birth rate per 1,000 population .....	10.3		16.4
Corrected Birth rate .....	11.8		
Still Births .....	nil		
Still Birth rate per 1,000 live & still births .....	—		21.6
Total live and still births .....	64		
Infant Deaths .....	3		
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births:			
Total .....	46.8		22.5
Infant mortality rate: Legitimate .....	49.1		
Infant mortality rate: Illegitimate .....	—		
Neo Natal mortality rate per 1,000 live births .....	46.8		
Illegitimate live births % of total live births .....	4.6%		
Maternal deaths (including abortion) .....	nil		
Maternal mortality rate per 1,000 live and still births .....	—		
Crude death rate per 1,000 population .....	16.3		11.7
Corrected death rate .....	9.9		

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Birth Rate</i>	<i>Death Rate</i>
1954	6,220	11.3	16.1
1955	6,220	9.6	18.6
1956	6,190	14.4	16.5
1957	6,210	11.4	18.0
1958	6,180	10.3	16.3

The chief causes of death were as follows:

Cancer .....	14
Diabetes .....	1
Vascular diseases .....	23
Coronary diseases .....	19
Heart diseases .....	17
Other circulatory diseases .....	3
Pneumonia .....	5
Bronchitis .....	3
Other respiratory diseases .....	1
Congenital .....	1
Other ill-defined causes .....	11
Accidental .....	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>101</b>

#### AGE OF DEATH TABLE

<i>Age at Death.</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Under 1 year .....	2	1
1 - 5 years .....	—	1
5 - 15 years .....	—	—
15 - 25 years .....	1	—
25 - 35 years .....	—	—
35 - 45 years .....	—	—
45 - 55 years .....	4	5
55 - 65 years .....	9	9
65 - 75 years .....	20	5
75 and over .....	19	25
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>46</b>

## SECTION "B"

### GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES

The general provision of the Health Services remain as in previous years.

**Welfare Foods:** The W.V.S. continue to give most valuable assistance distributing these foods to the general public.

**Maternity Accommodation:** During the year 223 babies were born at the Tavistock Maternity Home as follows:

Tavistock Urban District .....	37
Tavistock Rural District .....	120
Others .....	66



**Ambulance Service:** A highly satisfactory service is provided by the St. John Ambulance Brigade, under delegated powers from the Local County Health Authority. This service provides a 24 hour cover for the whole of the district and is most efficient. Powers of far reaching authority for the administration of the service is vested in the local County Health Authority, and for the discipline of the Brigade with the St. John Headquarters. The day to day administration and actual running of the service is entirely local. This is undoubtedly, in my opinion, the major contributory factor in its efficiency.

**Care, Disposal and General Management of those who are old, infirm, or for various reasons require care and attention:**

In my opinion, humanitarian efforts as regards this group are unsuccessful in this widely scattered country district. Our most important assistant—the multi-duty Relieving Officer—has been dispensed with, and his place has been taken by a number of specialists, such as authorised officers working under the County Mental Health Department (who may be anything up to 40 miles distant), the Welfare Officer, working under a branch of the County Clerk's Department (who likewise has an enormous territory to cover), the National Assistance Officer—who is a Civil Servant—and covers what to my mind is an area of such size that a proper and humane knowledge of all those in need of financial assistance cannot be properly come by. We also have the Registrar of births and deaths, who although more localised, is in some cases not easily accessible.

There is no doubt, in my mind, that an irrefutable case can be made out for the re-establishment of the multi-duty officer in these rural areas. One can quite readily imagine that the implementation of the administration of these various Acts and Orders is justified when applied to a city, where administration is carried out from a central point accessible to the whole town, but this set-up is quite impossible to reproduce in this scarcely populated area, where for a specialist to have sufficient work to occupy his time, an enormous area has to be included under his administration.

We have a further difficulty at the moment. With the dissolution of the unions, and the absorption of most of the bodies into the Regional Hospital Scheme, an acute problem arises which has not been resolved. This is being accentuated year by year by the progress in medical science, whereby such deaths as acute bronchial pneumonia, knowns as “the old man's friend,” no longer is a hazard. Consequently, we are, year by year, being faced with an ever growing number of old folk to be cared for in one way or another.

An analysis of my deaths returns show the following figures:

Average percentage of deaths in persons over 65 years  
of age in the years preceeding the introduction of  
antibiotics                   ...                   ...                   ...                   ...                   67% of total deaths.

Average percentage of deaths in persons over 65 years  
of age in the years succeeding the introduction of  
antibiotics                   ...                   ...                   ...                   ...                   79% of total deaths.

this shows an increase of something like 12% on an annual basis, of old people who have to be cared for, and the accommodation is not available.

The palatial "old folks' homes" which are being erected by the County Welfare Authorities are by no means the answer to this problem, and at the present rate of increase will never catch up with the accumulating requirements. On the other hand one could not, under any circumstances, recommend the return of the old workhouse system. What would appear to be imperative is that an intermediary institution be considered. Something between the present day palatial monument to the Welfare Department and the monstrosity created by their predecessors.

**Doctor Budding, the Assistant County Medical Officer has submitted the following report on her work during the year:**

"The School Health Service has now been in existence for 50 years, and during this time many remarkable changes have taken place. The emphasis of the work has moved away from general hygiene and treatment for malnutrition to mainly preventive work. The general cleanliness of the children is one of the most marked improvements. Fifty years ago verminousness was usual in State Schools, and school nurses spent much of their time treating this condition. To-day the verminous child is almost unknown, in fact, in some schools hygiene inspections have become infrequent because they are 100% clean. The children are well nourished and well clothed, the dirty, undernourished, ragged child, with scabies and rickets, has almost disappeared, and the odd problem family amongst whom these children are found are so rare as to be an exception. This has been largely accomplished by hard work in educating the parents (through the children), regular school medical inspections, school milk and dinners together with a higher standard of living. Children are now physically fit to derive full benefit from their education. Due mainly to the Diphtheria Immunisation campaign just before World War II, schools are never closed for epidemics of this disease, and the disease itself has almost died out.

"This is the first full working year of the new Tavistock Clinic. This clinic is open almost every day, and some evenings, and has fulfilled its purpose in catering for the population of the Urban and Rural districts.

#### **Poliomyelitis Vaccination:**

"The position at the beginning of 1958 was that all children registered for Poliomyelitis vaccination during 1956 had received both their first and second injections, and registrations had been accepted for all children between the ages of 2 to 10 years. During the early months of 1958 this second batch of children received both injections, and registration was then extended to expectant mothers and babies of six months. These too received injections. In the early summer vaccination was again extended to include children up to 15 years of age, and all these had been completed by the middle of July. In the Autumn a further extension in the age range included young adults from the ages of 15-25 years. In order to get these vaccinations completed in the case of young working adults, evening sessions were held. At the end of 1958 over 70% of the population up to 15 years of age had been vaccinated, and this is felt to be a satisfactory position; however, in common with the rest of the country, the young adults in the 15-25 age group have not come forward as expected. This seems a



pity as young people of this age are particularly vulnerable to Poliomyelitis, and should take advantage of the immunisation offered. Incidentally all the medical staff have been vaccinated as they became eligible during the year.

“During the autumn it was decided that a third injection was necessary to complete the vaccination, and a start was made with this work. It has, of course, taken up a tremendous amount of time and other work has had to suffer as a consequence, but this extra precaution should prove its worth in the long run. By the end of 1959 all eligible groups will have been completed. All babies are now given Poliomyelitis vaccination as a matter of routine, if desired, at six months.

### **Diphtheria Immunisation:**

“During the year it was decided to combine Diphtheria inoculations with inoculations against Tetanus (lockjaw) and parents have availed themselves of this very well. It should be emphasised however, that a booster dose is still necessary at 5 years of age.

“In some parts of the country the percentage immunised against Diphtheria has dropped, with the result that small isolated epidemics have occurred during the year. This shows the importance of keeping up the level of immunisation to 75% for the community as a whole.

### **Whooping Cough Immunisation:**

“Whooping Cough immunisation was also given to babies from the age of two months onwards, and the response to this is very satisfactory.

### **Tuberculosis Vaccination (B.C.G.):**

“During the year vaccination against Tuberculosis was offered for the first time to children of 13 years of age. Hitherto only contact cases were permitted to have vaccination as the vaccine was in short supply, being manufactured in Denmark. In this area 69% availed themselves of this opportunity, and this shows room for improvement. Surely as Tuberculosis is now being stamped out among cattle it is of equal importance that every method should be used to stamp it out among humans. The age of thirteen has been chosen to ensure that children who have no immunity, should have some protection before they leave school and enter the community at what is a particularly vulnerable age.

“Another innovation in the school work of this year has been the beginning of routine testing of the hearing of both babies and school children. Owing to the pressure of work—particularly Poliomyelitis vaccination—we have been unable to do much new work this year, but it is hoped that this routine testing will now expand and prove to be of great value to the area. For many years childrens’ eyes have been tested yearly in Devon’s schools, and many defects discovered and treated at the earliest possible age. Defects in hearing, if unrecognised, are frequently the cause of backwardness in a child. Severe and moderate degrees of deafness can be found with our examinations of babies, and this is important in that the earlier the defect is discovered the more early treatment can begin and the more normal speech can become. Undoubtedly a larger number of children will, in the future, use hearing aids as to-day they use spectacles. We have several children in schools using hearing aids quite naturally, and this makes a considerable difference both to their work and attitude towards life.



"During the year we lost our Speech Therapist, who took an appointment nearer her home. However a new Therapist (Mrs. Fulford) was appointed at the end of the year.

"The Dental work continues, and we are fortunate in this area when there is a shortage of school dentists throughout the country, in having had the services of a full time dental surgeon for the past six years. He works full time in Tavistock for six months of the year, and attends once a fortnight during the rest of the time.

#### **Mental Health Work:**

"There is still room for improvement in the care of children who are not able to attend school on account of mental defects. A number of these children are sociable but lead very isolated lives, thus gaining no benefit from the company of other children. At present a small class is held for them once a week, but there has been difficulty in finding a teacher to run it. At the end of the year a full time teacher was appointed and we hope that the work will expand during the next year to the benefit of both the children and their parents. These children are not bad enough to be in an Institution, but are a constant tie to their parents, their brothers and their sisters, and by working in a group in these small classes they can be taught to do quite a lot for themselves.

"We have had many visitors to the Clinic during the year, and always welcome anybody who is interested and wishes to see the work that goes on there."

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### **SECTION "C"**

#### **SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE AREA**

##### **Water Supply:**

Throughout the year water has been supplied to the Town from the Kilworthy and Pimple Reservoirs. Routine weekly samples of both supplies have been taken and these indicate similar circumstances and conditions as those existing in the previous year.

##### **Sewage Disposal:**

Temporary improvements have been made to the Crowndale works and have proved very satisfactory. These improvements will continue to deal effectively with the sewage disposal until such time as the new works are established. Samples taken throughout the year have shown satisfactory results.

##### **Refuse Collection:**

During the year a weekly system of domestic and trade refuse collection has been operative.

Controlled tipping has been effectively continued throughout the year. With the help of more diligent control and tipping methods, no fires have broken out to hinder the steady use of all possible tipping area.

**Swimming Bath:**

The open air swimming bath, owned by the Council, was opened to the public on May 15th and remained open until 16th September.

During this period the usual arrangements for the use of the bath by organised parties of school children were operative.

**Sanitary Inspection of the Area:**

The following table shows the number of visits made in connection with routine work in addition to work itemised in the various sections:

Drainage .....	35
Rodent Control .....	45
House Applications .....	54
Housing Management .....	794
Sanitary defects and complaints .....	37
Pet Shops .....	1
Disinfection .....	5
Disinfestation .....	7
Crowndale Sewage Works and Tip .....	120
Improvement Grants .....	3
Sewage Works effluent and River samples ...	25
Special Visits .....	225

**FACTORIES ACTS, 1937 AND 1948.**

**1. INSPECTIONS.**

<i>Premises</i>	<i>Number on Register</i>	<i>Number of</i>		
		<i>Inspec- tions</i>	<i>Written Notices</i>	<i>Occupiers Prosecuted</i>
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities ...	9	7	—	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the local Authorities ...	57	33	—	—
(iii) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authorities ...	4	12	—	—
TOTAL ...	70	52	—	—

2. CASES IN WHICH DEFECTS WERE FOUND.

Particulars	Number of cases in which defects were found				Number of cases in which prosecutions were made
	Found	Remedied	Referred To H.M. Inspector	By H.M. Inspector	
Want of Cleanliness ...	1	1	—	1	—
Overcrowding	—	—	—	—	—
Unreasonable Temperature	—	—	—	—	—
Inadequate Ventilation	—	—	—	—	—
Ineffective drainage of floors	1	1	—	1	—
Sanitary Conveniences : (a) Insufficient	—	—	—	—	—
(b) Unsuitable or defective	—	—	—	—	—
(c) Not separate for the sexes	—	—	—	—	—
Other offences	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	2	2	—	2	—

3. OUTWORK.

<i>Nature of Work</i>	<i>Number of out-workers in August list required by Section 110 (i) (c)</i>
Wearing apparel Making, etc.	1



## Weather:

The total rainfall for the year was 57.29 inches, 7 inches higher than the rainfall for 1957, the greater proportion falling in the last six months of the year.

January	.....	6.06 inches.
February	.....	4.87 inches.
March	.....	1.54 inches.
April	.....	1.02 inches.
May	.....	4.75 inches.
June	.....	4.30 inches.
July	.....	4.85 inches.
August	.....	7.95 inches.
September	.....	7.35 inches.
October	.....	5.07 inches.
November	.....	3.58 inches.
December	.....	5.95 inches.

Measurable amounts of rain fell on 176 out of 365 days.

The average dry temperatures for each month were:

January	.....	40.0 degrees.
February	.....	44.6 degrees.
March	.....	42.6 degrees.
April	.....	46.8 degrees.
May	.....	52.6 degrees.
June	.....	57.1 degrees.
July	.....	60.0 degrees.
August	.....	59.0 degrees.
September	.....	58.4 degrees.
October	.....	53.1 degrees.
November	.....	46.3 degrees.
December	.....	41.9 degrees.

Snow fell on two days in January, one day in February and one day in March.

## SECTION "D"

### HOUSING

Ten Council dwellings were completed and occupied during the year on the Greenlands Estate, six houses being two bedroom type and four being one bedroom type flats.

Two one bedroom type flats were completed and occupied at Bannawell Street.

A total of 273 dwellings have been completed and occupied since the building commenced in 1946.

Seventeen houses were erected by private enterprise and occupied during the year in addition to the above figures.

There were 179 applicants for Council houses on the register on 31st December 1958. Sixty-two of these applicants were resident in the rural and other areas.

The following list indicates the different types of accommodation required by the applicants:

Single Bedroom requirements .....	66 applicants.
Two Bedroom requirements .....	75 applicants.
Three Bedroom requirements .....	35 applicants.
Four Bedroom requirements .....	3 applicants.

Nine Council house tenants availed themselves of the Council's offer to allow them to purchase the houses they occupied.

On 31st December 1958 the Council controlled the following properties:

4. bedroom houses (all built prior to 1946) .....	4
3. bedroom houses (116 pre 1946 and 121 post 1946= 237, less 30 sold to occupiers) .....	207
2. bedroom houses (24 pre 1946 and 89 post 1946= 113, less 3 sold to occupiers) .....	110
2. bedroom old persons Bungalows (all post 1946) ...	12
single bedroom maisonettes (all post 1946) .....	44
2. bedroom maisonettes (all post 1946) .....	3
2. bedroom Bungalows (all post 1946) .....	4
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>384</b>

### Slum Clearance:

As a result of work undertaken in the previous year by the Council, the seven areas which were declared by the Council to be treated as demolition orders were unopposed, apart from one, which was brought before the County Court, and the Judge in his summing up stated that he accepted the evidence of the Council's officials without hesitation and confirmed the demolition order.

With regard to the Clearance Order, this was converted into a Compulsory Purchase Order, and an enquiry was held by H.M. Inspector on 22nd October 1958, and this has since been confirmed by the Minister with minor alterations regarding compensation for borderline premises.

During the Autumn a survey was carried out of the Council Housing situation and a comprehensive report presented to the Council. This report included tables clearly showing the density of occupation and it was apparent that many three-bedroomed houses are at present occupied by elderly couples whose families now have homes of their own. As a result of this survey a circular letter was sent out to all occupants of underoccupied houses asking the tenants whether they would consider removing to smaller houses as and when they became available, but the response has not been encouraging.

**SECTION “E”**

**INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD**

**Milk:**

Two premises in the Urban Area are registered by the Council under the Milk and Dairies Regulations, 1949. Eleven visits were made during the year, no action was found to be necessary.

Regular monthly samples of milk were taken from all retailers and the following table shows the number taken and the results obtained.

<i>Type of Milk</i>	<i>No. of Samples</i>	<i>Passed</i>	<i>Failed</i>
Pasturized .....	30	28	2
T.T. ....	29	23	6
	—	—	—
TOTAL:	59	51	8
	—	—	—

**Other Food Premises:**

During the year regular inspections were made of various food premises in the town. The number of food premises in the area, by type of business is:

Grocers .....	23
Butchers and Stalls .....	17
Greengrocers .....	9
Fishmongers .....	2
Bakers .....	7
Sweet Confectioners .....	10
Chain Stores .....	2
Cafés .....	8
Hotels .....	11
Guest Houses, Bed and Breakfast, etc. ....	21

The number of food premises registered under Section 16 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1955, for the manufacture of sausages and preserved foods=9 and for the sale of Ice Cream=26.

A total of 10 Ice Cream samples were taken during the year. The results were as follows:

Grade I. ....	10
---------------	----

No premises in the area is used for the manufacture of Ice Cream.



During the year 73 inspections of food premises were made, and no formal action under the Act was taken.

No educational events were organised by this Council during the year in connection with food handling, etc.

Condemned food stuffs (other than meat and offal from the abattoir) is collected and disposed of on the Council's refuse tips.

No special examination of any particular stock or consignment of food was found to be necessary.

#### **Meat Inspection:**

Meat inspection has been fully carried out by your Inspector at the abattoir during the year. 17,909 carcasses were dealt with, and showed an increase of 238 over the preceeding year. This involved 1,128 visits to the abattoir.

Details of the number of animals killed and inspected, and the carcasses, parts or organs, condemned are set out in the table on page fifteen.

#### **Condemned Meat and Offals:**

Condemned meat and offals were collected from the abattoir by approved contractors.

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#### **Samples taken under Section 3 Food and Drugs Act, 1938:**

MARZIPAN  
FISH CAKES  
GOLDEN RAISING FLOUR  
PORK SAUSAGES—5 samples  
PUFF PASTRY  
PICCALILLI  
PORK BRAWN  
PEANUT BUTTER  
SALAD DRESSING  
ASCORBIC ACID VITAMIN  
C. TABLETS  
ANEURINE  
CORNFLOUR  
GELATINE  
BAKED BEANS WITH PORK  
SAUSAGES  
ESSENCE OF RENNET  
BREAD AND BUTTER  
PORK LUNCHEON MEAT—  
2 samples  
DRAUGHT VINEGAR  
ICE CREAM—3 samples  
SELF RAISING FLOUR  
CAYENNE PEPPER  
CHEESE SPREAD  
MINCEMEAT

ALL GENUINE

#### **Food Poisoning:**

No case of food poisoning was notified during the year.

## SECTION "F"

### PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES

Notifiable infectious diseases which have occurred during the year are set out in the following tables:

#### Diseases notified by Doctors during the year:

Age	Whooping Cough		Scarlet Fever	
	M.	F.	M.	F.
Under 1 year .....	—	—	—	—
1 - 2 years .....	—	1	—	—
3 - 4 years .....	1	—	—	—
5 - 9 years .....	3	4	—	—
10 - 14 years .....	—	—	—	—
15 - 25 years .....	—	—	1	—
25 and over .....	—	—	—	—
TOTAL:	4	5	1	—

#### Infectious diseases notified by School Authorities during the year:

Tavistock County Primary School:

Whooping Cough ..... 3 cases.

#### Diphtheria and Poliomyelitis:

No cases of this disease have been notified during the year.

#### Tuberculosis:

No deaths from this cause were recorded during the year. Two new cases were notified, one pulmonary and one non-pulmonary.

At the end of the year 54 cases remained on the Register as follows:

PULMONARY		NON-PULMONARY	
M.	F.	M.	F.
28	16	4	6

CARCASES AND OFFAL INSPECTED AND CONDEMNED IN WHOLE OR IN PART.

	<i>Cattle excluding Cows</i>	<i>Cows</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Sheep and Lambs</i>	<i>Pigs</i>	<i>Horses</i>
Number killed (if known)	2080	240	280	7621	7688	—
Number Inspected	2080	240	280	7621	7688	—
All diseases except Tuberculosis and Cysticerci: Whole carcasses condemned	5	4	3	42	10	—
Carcases of which some part or organ was con- demned ..	229	57	2	282	116	—
Percentage of the number inspected affected with dis- ease other than tuberculosis and cysticerci ...	11.25%	25.4%	1.7%	4.25%	1.6%	—
Tuberculosis only: Whole carcasses condemned ...	5	6	1	—	4	—
Carcases of which some part or organ was con- demned ...	65	22	—	—	133	—
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis	3.3%	11.6%	0.35%	—	1.7%	—
Cysticercosis: Carcases of which some part or organ was con- demned ...	27	—	—	—	—	—
Carcases submitted to treatment by refrigeration ..	27	—	—	—	—	—
Generalised and totally condemned	—	—	—	—	—	—



In conclusion I would thank the Chairman and Council for the ready hearing I have received at all times and the Public Health Staff and others who have materially assisted in the preparation of this report.

I am, Mr. Chairman and Councillors,

Your obedient Servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.



